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Samizdat Is Russia's Underground Press

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By ALBERT PARRY

CENSORSHIP existed even before literature, say the Russians. And, we may add, censorship being older, literature has to be craftier. Hence, the new and remarkably viable underground press in the Soviet Union called *samizdat*.

The word is a play on *Gosizdat*, which is a telescoping of *Gosudar-*

stvennoye Izdatelstvo, the name of the monopoly-wielding State Publishing House. The *sam* part of the new word means "self." The whole—*samizdat*—translates as: "We publish ourselves"—that is, not the state, but we, the people.

Unlike the underground of Czarist times, today's *samizdat* has no printing presses (with rare exceptions): The K.G.B., the secret police, is too efficient. It is the typewriter, each page produced with four to eight carbon copies, that does the job. By the thousands and tens of thousands of frail, smudged onionskin sheets, *samizdat* spreads across the land a mass of protests and petitions, secret court minutes, Alexander Solzhenitsyn's banned novels, George Orwell's "Animal Farm" and "1984," Nicholas Berdyaev's philosophical essays, documents of the Czech Spring, all sorts of sharp political discourses and angry poetry.

The impudence of the movement, even at this time of heightened persecution, reaches a point where invitations to an evening get-together include whispered lures that "a poet published by *samizdat* will be present." Of late, *samizdat* publications have percolated even into the high schools, where some of the authors and typists are the youngsters themselves. The popularity of *samizdat* with the younger generation is attested by this widely told Moscow story:

A Soviet official strides into his wife's room. "Nastasha, you have been typing for five straight days," he says. "What takes so long?" "Oh, Ivan, don't you know?—I am typing Tolstoy's 'Anna Karenina,' that's what." "But why? There is the book. It's perfectly legible, you can read it in print." "Yes, but the censor won't read anything unless it's typed."

A WESTERN Sovietologist cannot study *samizdat* on the spot. The K.G.B. would quickly net him. But comprehensive channels of information do thrive between *samizdat* and its Western sympathizers. I have just returned from a swing through several European centers of such information.

In January, Munich's Institute for the Study of the U.S.S.R. ran in London a three-day symposium, entirely in Russian, at which recent Soviet defectors, mostly writers (headed by Anatoly Kuznetsov and Arkady Belinkov), but also musicians, film directors and professors now living in England, Germany, France and the United States, discussed the problem of Soviet censorship and the ways of eluding it. I was invited to attend and listen. In London, at the conference and in numerous private interviews, and later also in Munich, Frankfurt, Paris, Zagreb, Belgrade and New York, I met these and other experts on *samizdat*. Files and piles of the most diverse underground publications were placed before me. Facts, rumors, personal experiences, ideologies were offered by old Western hands in Kremlinology and the latest Russian *perebezhchiki* ("crossers-over," as defectors call themselves). In this report, necessarily, not all the sources of my data can be identified.

In Frankfurt, a proud collector showed me the earliest underground Soviet-era item known to have survived: a hand-written, solidly bound book on religious themes done in Moscow in 1925. At Leyden University, Prof. Karel van het Reve has one of the best collections of *samizdat* books, brochures, and leaflets of the late nineteen-sixties. The count, he told me, is 140 entries, and it is fast growing. The freshest 1970 specimens are just beginning to come in.

The starkest paucity of such publications occurred in Stalin's long period between, say, 1927 and his death in 1953. His terror was too embracive to allow much, if any, underground literature. Khrushchev meant a glimpse of hope, and thus rather few people protested in the mid-fifties and early sixties. Then

Khrushchev's fall in October, 1964, dimmed the timid light. Still, the new Brezhnev-Kosygin terror was not so complete as Stalin's, and so underground typing and copying began to spurt in 1965-66.

The year 1965 was marked by the appearance of the clandestine journals *Russkoye Slovo* (Russian Word), *Kolokol* (The Bell), both named for anti-Czarist periodicals of a century earlier, and *Sfinks* (Sphinx). They contained essays of socio-political protest, but the emphasis was mainly on free-spirited poetry.

In September, 1965, Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel were arrested in Moscow for having published in the West, for nearly a decade, their pseudonymous antiregime books. They were tried and condemned in

"Do-it-yourself" is the general idea. It means the forbidden writings that circulate among Soviet intellectuals.

February, 1966. The atmosphere of reaction and repression was hotting up.

Nonetheless, the underground press did not abate. Instead, it shifted its accent from poetry and other literary content to politics. The protest of intellectuals against the Sinyavsky-Daniel case led to Alexander Ginzburg's "Belaya Kniga" ("White Book") of the complete minutes of the trial. In time, Ginzburg and his group—Yuri Galanskov, Alexei Dobrovolsky, and Vera Lashkova—were also arrested and, in early 1968, tried. But the 400-page minutes of their secret trial became also available to *samizdat*. And it was in 1967-68 that one of the most remarkable documents of the underground appeared in *samizdat*: the call by Academician Andrei Sakharov, one of the fathers of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, for progress, coexistence and intellectual freedom—his warning against the resurgence of Stalinism in the Kremlin.

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